Migratory Species Committee Report
October 29, 2026
Dr. Kesley Banks, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda **(Tab M, No. 1)** and approved the minutes **(Tab M, No. 2)** of the April 2026 meeting.

Discussion of Shark Depredation (Tab M, Nos. 4a and b)

The Committee received two presentations on research to describe and develop mitigation measures of shark depredation in the Gulf. A Committee member stated there was hesitancy to report areas of depredation because there is concern that those areas would then be identified as potential areas of closure for shark conservation. Dr. Marcus Drymon (Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant) responded that there are known "hot spots" of depredation activity in the Florida Keys and he suggested that these areas might serve as potential research areas to see how sustainable removals of non-prohibited shark species affected rates of observed depredation. Another Committee member explained that in his area off Alabama that there appeared to be a season and depth pattern to shark depredation. Dr. Drymon stated that researchers have documented differing habitat use and seasonality for sandbar and bull sharks, two species identified frequently as contributing to depredation. A Committee member questioned the efficacy of the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2022 that prohibits the sale of shark fins. Dr. Drymon agreed that policy disregarded the ability of fishermen to sustainably harvest healthy populations and did little to help mitigate global illegal trade overall.

In response to the presentation by Dr. John Carlson (Southeast Fisheries Science Center [SEFSC]), a Committee member asked about the long rebuilding plans that are in place for many shark species and asked if those were going to be reexamined. Dr. Carlson answered that the current sandbar shark stock assessment could provide the opportunity to modify the rebuilding plan depending on the outcome of that process. Dr. John Walter (SEFSC staff) clarified that the proposed Management Strategy Evaluation approach allows management advice to be less dependent upon uncertainties in historical landings and life history assumptions and, instead, bases catch limit changes on trends in recent indices, while continuing to meet necessary statutory requirements for rebuilding and avoid overfishing. A Committee member reported that research surveys being conducted off the coast of Alabama have been documenting depredation events and could be considered for depredation projects the SEFSC are planning to conduct.

Update on Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Policy Documents (Tab M, No 5)

HMS staff provide an update and timelines of ongoing regulatory actions for HMS managed species. A Committee asked what measures were being considered to reduce duplicative reporting for fishermen that have multiple fishing permits in the Gulf as well as HMS fishing permits. HMS staff responded that the goal would be to eventually allow for a "one-stop" reporting approach, but that a reporting application would need to be approved by both HMS and partnering NMFS offices. Specific to the Southeast For-hire Integrated Reporting (SEFHIER) program, Southeast Regional Office staff indicated that the e-Trips application was used for the previous iteration of the SEHFIER programs, is currently approved for HMS programs, and could be used to avoid duplicative reporting. Additionally, there is the possibility that other application software could be approved by various programs over time to be used as a "one-stop" reporting mechanism.

This concludes my report.